

Series II
Subjects Files,
1916-1973

Box 15, Folder 11

Slide presentation,
Battle of Surigao
Strait,
1947

0250

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :

DATE:

FROM :

SUBJECT:

These comments were made by some officer who apparently had heard my lecture which I gave at the National War College in 1947(?). I do not agree with him as I did not say what he has written here. I denounced him to Ad Brown and have heard nothing more.

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COMMENTS ON THE BATTLE OF SURAGAIO STRAITS

In the winter of 1947, Commodore Bates, former Chief of Staff to Admiral Oldendorf, gave the National War College a description of the Battle of Suragaio Straits, - in his own words, "A battle perfectly conceived and perfectly executed". In his discussion, he outlined how, due to good scouting information, Oldendorf was able to line both sides of the strait with his light forces and place his heavy ships, battleships and cruisers, across the northern end of the waterway, thus "crossing the T" - the "perfect" naval surface action. From here, Bates described the tenseness on the bridges of the heavy ships, slowly steaming east then west, while waiting for the unsuspecting Japs to enter the trap.

The order for the battleships to open fire was given at approximately 23,000 yards which for some reason or other was not carried out until the range had closed to 21,000 yards. Some mix up follows with the cruisers at one time blanketing the battleship fire, but in general the results may be said to have been good since few if any Japs escaped. Bates seemed very well pleased with the "perfect sea battle".

However, let's look at the situation. Oldendorf had two major missions, both closely related.

- (1) Shore Bombardment
- (2) Close protection of the Transports
and Landing Area from surface attack.

One third of the ammunition carried by the BB was bombardment (completely unsuited for surface action, especially vs BB), and a considerable portion of this had been expended. Kinkaid knew of the Jap approach through Suragaio (having sent Oldendorf to intercept) and seems to have been the only commander who realized there might be a threat from the San Bernadino area. Oldendorf's information concerning Jap movements was well nigh perfect.

COMMENTS ON THE BATTLE OF SURAGAIO STRAITS (CONT'D)

In addition, he outnumbered his opponent at least three to one in every category of ships. His radar was excellent and promised to give him the unparalleled advantage in naval action of complete surprise in night action with his forces disposed in the perfect tactical position. Personally, I consider it perfect for a day action but definitely inferior to the broadside position in a surprise night action. The point is that Bates & Co. thought it the perfect position.

Oldendorf undoubtedly knew of the San Bernadino threat (or he should have) and yet with these terrific advantages he chose to open fire at 23,000 yards with guns which were originally designed to be effective well inside of 20,000 yards or thereabouts. Apparently, he was unwilling to accept a single hit in achieving his victory (which under the circumstances was certainly assured) and thus placed in jeopardy the transports, whose safety was practically his sole mission, by unwarranted expenditure of ammunition. I appreciate fully the threat of Japanese torpedoes, whose war record is remarkable for their success, but with proper maneuvering Oldendorf should have been able to have completely eliminated the Japs with four or five rapid salvos, delivered well inside of 15,000 yards and then retired with sufficient rapidity to have outrun any possible torpedo attack. Instead he chose to expend his precious AP ammunition at near maximum effective range in an unnecessarily protracted engagement, leaving himself practically helpless should any new Jap surface threat appear.

The action was fought in the very early hours of the morning. I have never been able to find out what the old battleships did thereafter. Did they pursue southward the crippled enemy that should never have needed any pursuing? Or did they retire to the northward to interpose themselves between possible new threats to the landing area? The latter action was of course the logical one, especially since about this time Kinkaid was attempting to ascertain if Halsey had the

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COMMENTS ON THE BATTLE OF SURAGAIO STRAITS (CONT'D)

San Bernadino straits covered, and even if no surface threat appeared the AA batteries of the OBB would have been very welcome to the transports in case of Jap air attack.

This has been written without notes or data with which to verify the figures used but I believe it to be substantially correct.

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Gentlemen of the National War College.

Show B47-1277

I cannot begin to tell you of how gratified I am to be here. I have long had a deep belief in the need for the education of naval officers in the art of war. I believe also in the training of naval officers in technology, which is a portion of the science of war, but I have always felt that, until this war, the idea of being an expert in technology took precedence over the idea of being an expert in the art of war, which is the application of the science of war to actual military situations. The employment of mental power in the solution of military problems now appears to have become recognized as an essential of fighting strength, as it is the source of professional judgment. Had this not been so, I doubt if we would have had a National War College and I further doubt that the National War College would have had the great prestige it already enjoys. There is no doubt but that the National War College fills an important place in the art and science of command. I believe every one of you should take great pride in being a member of this student body.

Cut B47-1277

Today we are going to discuss the Battle of SURIGAO Strait which is one of the more popular battles of the war because of the crossing of the T. I shall endeavor to portray that battle as based on the information available from both American and Japanese sources. However, my information from Japanese sources

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is generally from interrogations, which experience has shown to be rather loosely worded. I have found that the documentary data, which is obtained from translations of reports of the Commanders of forces and of ships; from the diaries, from the logs and from the merit reports is far more accurate than the interrogations are. None of this data has been made available at this time for this study of the Battle of SURIGAO Strait. However, some of the Japanese movements here portrayed are my own modifications of sketches which were made by Japanese naval officers at the Japanese Naval War College. These sketches were drawn on charts of SURIGAO Strait which had been prepared by our own naval historians and had been submitted to the Japanese in Tokyo for comment.

The Battle of SURIGAO Strait was one of three related actions which comprised the Battle for LEYTE GULF. These three actions all resulted from the Japanese opposition to the American landings at LEYTE GULF on 20 October 1944.

Before going into a discussion of SURIGAO Strait it might be well to discuss for a moment, the strategical considerations which led up to the Battle of LEYTE GULF. It will be remembered that American strategy called for a two-prong drive across the Pacific--one drive, spearheaded by a combined Allied Army-Navy Force commanded by General of the Army MacArthur, was moving from the SOLOMONS and NEW GUINEA, the other drive, spearheaded by an Army-Navy-Marine Force commanded by Fleet Admiral Nimitz, was moving west from GUAM, ENIWETOK and PEARL HARBOR. MacArthur's drive which had seized HOLLANDIA, BIAK and CAPE SANSPOR was next to seize TALAUD and MOROTAI and Admiral NIMITZ's drive was next to seize PELEUIU, YAP and ULITHI. The successful accomplishment of these

two operations would effectively clear the sea approaches east of the PHILIPPINES and would provide the Allies with bases from which the VISAYAS and MINDANAO could be attacked by shore based air forces, and LUZON by carrier aviation. Also these islands would be stepping stones for the attack on MINDANAO originally planned for some time in November.

The operations for the capture of MOROTAI and PELELIU took place as scheduled. The Marines landed on PELELIU on 14 September, but it was not until 12 October that enemy resistance ceased. MOROTAI was captured on 15 September with slight opposition.

During and preceding the operations for the capture of the above islands, the fast carrier force under Admiral Halsey had been making air strikes on MINDANAO to neutralize the bases from which aircraft might interfere with the above operations. These air strikes disclosed an unexpected air weakness in MINDANAO, so it was decided to strike in the Central PHILIPPINES on 12 September to test the defenses there. Very little opposition was encountered. As a result, Commander 3rd Fleet recommended that the operations for capturing YAP and PELELIU be cancelled and that LEYTE be seized immediately. CinCPoa replied that PELELIU would be taken and YAP reconsidered. Meanwhile, MacArthur had captured MOROTAI.

On 14 September, the JCS decided to by-pass YAP and TALAUD and to land on LEYTE instead on 20 October. This plan was followed, and MacArthur's 6th Army landed on LEYTE as scheduled.

Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, CTF 77, was General MacArthur's naval commander and, as such, was responsible for all naval matters connected with the landing. Rear Admiral Jesse D. Oldendorf was a task group Commander under Vice Admiral Kinkaid and, as such, commanded the Bombardment and Fire Support Groups of Task Force

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77, with the title of Commander Task Group 77.2.

The Japanese realized that the Allied forces were moving across the Pacific in two prongs. However, they showed extreme reluctance to embark in an all-out defense of the southwestern prong--the MacArthur prong--unless the Japanese high command became convinced that the major Allied thrust was directed to that area. The Central Pacific was the area of primary concern, as it was nearer the Japanese Homeland.

After the American capture of the MARIANAS, the Japanese estimated that the Allied Forces would seize PALAU and HALMAHERA in mid-September and that the PHILIPPINES would be invaded about middle November. How close an estimate this was of the Allied plans! MOROTAI and HALMAHERA are the only difference.

The Japanese, therefore, established a new line of defense joining the PHILIPPINE Islands, FORMOSA, RYUKYU Island, Japanese Mainland, HOKKAIDO and KURILE Islands. The operations for the defense of this area were designated "SHO".

SHO #1 was the defense of the PHILIPPINE Islands area.

The Japanese were not alarmed by the air raids by the fast carriers in the RYUKYUS, FORMOSA and PHILIPPINES. They considered these to be no more than simple raids, and were not thought to be preparatory steps to the invasion of the PHILIPPINES. The Japanese therefore decided to destroy American forces during the month of October by land based aircraft. They hoped by these operations to slow down the Allied advance into the PHILIPPINES thus giving the Japanese a chance to prepare for the defense of the PHILIPPINES. Surface forces were not to be used unless the Allied intent to land in the PHILIPPINES became apparent.

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However, the Allied landing in LEYTE in October changed the Japanese defensive time table and called for an immediate decision. The Japanese realized that they were at a decisive stage of the war, and that failure to drive the Americans from the LEYTE beachheads would probably insure their defeat in the war. They therefore reacted with all available forces. Sho #1 was activated. One Carrier Force called the Northern Force was sent on a northerly course to the east of LUZON to draw off Admiral Halsey's 3rd Fleet, one surface ship force called the Center Force sortied thru SAN BERNARDINO Strait, and, in endeavoring to reach LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait, east collided with Rear Admiral Sprague's escort carrier group, and the third force, a surface ship force called the Southern Force, in endeavoring to reach LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait, south, was annihilated by Rear Admiral Oldendorf's Bombardment and Fire Support Group. It is with this latter action that today's presentation deals.

The plans for the Battle of SURIGAO actually began to take shape while Rear Admiral Oldendorf was at HOLLANDIA during the planning for the LEYTE GULF operation. He made a careful analysis, at that time, of the possible enemy forces that might be encountered in the LEYTE operation and the strength and weakness factors compared to his own command, and, then he promulgated a battle plan which covered the range band at which to fire--

17000 to 20,000 yards--also the possible battle formation A-2-- and the fact that attacks by destroyers may be ordered prior to the engagement of the battlelines. He chose the range band on the fact that the allowance of AP for all ships was low-- about 20% of normal for 14" and 16" guns--about 67% for 8" guns and normal loads for 6" guns and below, and It was considered imperative that the expectancy of hits should be high. These loads were based on the fact that the Bombardment & Fire Support Group was loaded for Palau and Yap and not for Leyte. The plan to take Leyte, rather than Yap, was a change from the original plan and was decided on about the time Peleliu fell. It was not thought that Palau or Yap were within ready striking distance of Japanese surface forces, and that the 3rd Fleet, acting as a Covering Force would intercept any threatening force. It was therefore decided to load for bombardment only. When it was decided to go to Leyte it was not possible to make much change in the ammunition loading, as there was little AP in the area and the reloads on the ammunition ships were in the same proportion of AP vs HC as had obtained for the original loads. Therefore, as a result of this analysis, CTG 77.2, Rear Admiral Oldendorf, and his staff, had a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his own command and a pretty good idea of the same factors of the Japanese. Of course it was realized that these factors change as the enemy ships encountered change and that a new analysis must be made for each

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particular case. However, the overall effect was of tremendous value later.

^{REAR Admiral Oldendorf}
~~CTG 77.2~~ was not unaware of what the enemy might attempt to do, as this group was to be the first of the invasion forces to arrive at Leyte and it was his responsibility to prepare the area for the landing of the 6th Army. <As early as 15 October, while en route to Leyte, he wrote in his night orders, for the information of the staff duty officer, the fact that it was quite possible that the enemy fleet might come thru San Bernardino Strait or Surigao Strait, or both, to endeavor to destroy his task force, TF 77.2, the Bombardment and Fire Support Group--or TF 77.4, the Escort Carrier Group, or both. This was because of the importance of the Philippines to Japan. From this time forward he had the possibility of such an action ever in his mind, and every move to replace ammunition and to cover own forces in Leyte Gulf was motivated by the possibility of surface ship action. The expenditure of AP ammunition was always viewed with concern, as replacement was difficult. In this connection it will be noted that only 48 rounds of 16" AP was available at Leyte Gulf on A/2 day. The Durham Victory had 1000 rounds of 16" 45 HC but this was not considered of any particular value against enemy heavy ships.

The Leyte landing was made by General Kruger's 6th Army all under the overall command of General MacArthur. It was undertaken under the concept of carrier based fighter support

with but little land based air support, as the Army Air Force bases were too far away, and Morotai had but recently been captured. If my memory does not play me false, I remember the Army Air General saying, at a planning conference at Hollandia, that his Mindoro air fields would not be ready for some time. Therefore all air cover was necessarily Navy, until the Leyte fields had been captured and made usable.

By agreement of forces concerned, the 3rd Fleet was to cover and support the operation as follows:

- (1) A-10 to A-7 Day effect carrier strikes on OKINAWA, FORMOSA and NORTHERN LUZON.
- (2) A-4 to and including A-day effect carrier strikes on the LUZON Central Philippine Area, and in direct support of the Landings.
- (3) A-1 and, thereafter, operate in strategic support, effecting strikes as the situation required.

The Leyte operation began on schedule and progressed satisfactorily. Initial landings were made on Saluan Island on October 17th, the main landing was made on October 20th, and the advance inland progressed as well as could be expected. However, beginning 23 October, it became increasingly apparent that a violent reaction had been provoked, involving most of the Japanese fleet.

Admiral Halsey, as Commander 3rd Fleet, had divided his task groups into three groups, and had assigned them in order from northwest to southeast in order TG 38.3, TF 38.2 and TG

38.4 at intervals of about 150 miles. TG 38.4 searched the southern Visayas. At 0905, October 24th, one of its search groups sighted and attacked a force reported to be 2 BB, 1 CA and 4 DD in the Sulu Sea south of Negros. This force, which we shall call the Southern Force, had not been sighted before. The search group attacked and claimed to have made two bomb hits on each battleship, and rocket hits on the destroyers of this group. Actually, this report was in error. There was one ineffective bomb hit made on the FUSO in the vicinity of her catapults and one hit made on the forward turret of the SHIGURE. Neither hit seriously affected the battle efficiency of either ship. This indicates the doubtful value of information from planes which are under heavy fire and which are endeavoring to deliver a good attack and then to retire as rapidly as possible. These attacks were finally ended at 1155.

Although a plane search had been made at dusk, it failed to locate the Southern Force and that force was not seen again until it was picked up by own PT boats around 2200.

CTF 77 (Vice Admiral Kinkaid), who had been following the operations with great care, realized that the Japanese Southern Force appeared headed for Leyte Gulf thru Surigao Strait south. He, therefore, ordered CTG 77.2 to prepare for a probable night engagement. He directed CTG 77.3, Rear Admiral Berkeley, with his task group, to report to Rear Admiral Oldendorf. TG 77.2 consisted of the old battleships, MISSISSIPPI, WEST VIRGINIA,

MARYLAND, TENNESSEE, CALIFORNIA and PENNSYLVANIA; the heavy cruisers LOUISVILLE, flagship of CTG 77.2, PORTLAND, MINNEAPOLIS, DENVER, COLUMBIA; Desron 56 consisting of NEWCOMB, BENNION, H.L. EDWARDS, R.P. LEARY, LEUTZE, ROBINSON, A.W. GRANT, BRYANT, HALFORD and Desdiv X-ray consisting of CLAXTON, THORN, WELLES, AULICK, CONY and SIGOURNEY. ⤵

4603 — ⤵ TG 77.2 consisted of heavy cruiser PHOENIX (Flagship CTG 77.3), light cruisers BOISE, SHROPSHIRE, (RAN) plus Desron 24 consisting of HUTCHINS, BACHE, BEALE, DALY, KILLEN and ARUNTA (RAN), all regularly assigned to the 7th Fleet. ^{CTF 77 also} He directed Desron 54, consisting of REMEX McGOWAN, MELVIN, McDERMUT and MONSSEN, which composed the pickets in Surigao Strait, to report for duty also. In addition, he ordered the 39 PT boats located at Panaon Island to scout the enemy in the eastern Mindanao Sea and the southern part of Surigao Strait, to report all contacts and to attack, if possible.

CTG 77.2 was not surprised at this order. He had also been tracking all Japanese contacts and he realized that action was imminent. However, he had been preparing for days for exactly this moment. It had been customary during the previous nights for T.G. 77.2 to take station south of Lat. 10°-46' N. and for T.G. 77.3 to take station south of the area between the southern transport group and T.G. 77.2, for the purpose of protecting the ships and beachheads.

Because of the many contacts which had been made on Japanese surface vessels, CTG 77.2 had decided, on 22 October,

that it would be wise to take precautionary dispositions in Leyte Gulf, with particular emphasis on Surigao Strait, south, and had issued a directive to his forces directing them to take stations with light forces initially located on an east-west line, four miles east of Tay Tay Point on course east, speed 5 knots, and with heavy forces plus destroyer screen located to the northwestward, south of latitude 10°-46' N. The heavy forces were placed in this area to give them the protection afforded by the area screen against torpedoes. The basic directive about remaining south of 10°-46' N. had come from CTF 77.

It is therefore apparent that, when, at 1513 on 24 October, CTG 77.2 received orders from CTF 77 to prepare for a night engagement, with indications that the enemy would probably approach through Surigao Strait, south, the concept of the Battle Plan had already been formulated. However, it became necessary to re-estimate the situation.

Naturally, what was desired was to maintain the favorable military situation then existing. As a running estimate was always maintained, as has been indicated previously, it was not too difficult to reestimate the situation. The question may have arisen, in some minds, as to the mental process that governed the positioning of CTG 77.2's command. Today it is quite simple to say that what he did was the correct thing to have done because it was so successful. However, at the time, it was not impossible that some ^{COMMANDERS} ~~Admirals~~ might have thought

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it wise to go down the Strait and slug it out with the Japs as was done at Guadalcanal. CTG 77.2 solved his problem along the lines of correct physical objective; advantageous relative position; correct apportionment of fighting strength and adequate freedom of action, all tested for suitability; feasibility, as determined by means available and opposed and the characteristics of the theater of operations; and acceptability as to costs.

He realized that the Japanese forces were the correct physical objectives. The question then arose as to advantageous relative position. Where would it be best to station own forces with relation to the Japanese coming into Leyte Gulf thru Surigao Strait, south? Shall they be across the Strait, and, if so, where; or shall the forces in their entirety go down the Strait, or shall only certain forces go down and the remainder be across the strait? Admiral Oldendorf weighed these three courses of action and decided that the third course was obviously the correct one. He would keep his heavy forces across the strait with all of the gunfire advantage that gave him with the possible crossing of the "T", and would endeavor, thru destroyer attacks, to so reduce the strength of the Japanese forces, and to so slow them down as to reduce heavily the possibility of own forces being torpedoed by long range Japanese torpedoes. In addition, by being across the strait, it was solely necessary to make a turn nine to comb the enemy torpedo tracks by paralleling their most probable tracks. This would reduce the danger from enemy torpedoes.

He rejected the second course because, although he might sink more enemy ships by such action, he would probably have many of his own ships damaged and sunk and he would lose that freedom of action that he would have with his forces across the strait where there was plenty of sea room to the north. Besides, in the resulting melee of forces, which melee could be expected because of the narrowness of the strait, some of the Japanese ships might have slipped by and attacked the transports in the transport area. This he was determined to prevent, and he informed his commanders, at the conference, to be discussed later, that a cardinal objective of his policy was not to permit any enemy ships to slip by.

Even after he had made his decision to station his forces across the strait, he realized that it was quite possible for the enemy to endeavor to outflank him, and that the best place to do this was along the western shore, as that was nearest the transport area. He therefore decided that his force would have to be stationed as near to the western shore as possible, to prevent any Japanese ship from slipping thru under cover of the shoreline and its anti-radar effect. He also realized that, by stationing his own forces that far to the west he was leaving quite a gap to the eastward. In order to reduce this gap and in order to catch the enemy in a ^{more} narrow part of the straits, he moved his battle line in from Tay Tay Point to HUNTUNGAN Point. He also decided that the left flank should be stronger than the right flank, so that he might detach some of

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these forces against any Japanese ship which was escaping to the north eastward. Another reason for strengthening his left flank was that he did not know what enemy forces might come in thru Surigao, east, whether from the north or from the south, and he had to observe this area. It was quite possible for some or all of the forces coming up from the south to pass thru HINATUAN Passage south of NONOC Island and thence north into the Pacific. Such forces could pass through Surigao east and join with any forces coming down from the north. So far, nothing, in the few Japanese reports studied, indicates that such course of action was contemplated by the Japanese, but it was a capability and was so considered by CIG 77.2. He did feel, however, that should the Japanese attempt such a move, the PT boats would discover them.

He prepared a general plan
~~the plan was~~ as follows:

(Paraphrased)

24 October 1944

General Situation. Jap air and surface forces appear to be gathering westward in Visayas for offensive strike on area of Leyte. Air attacks have been made all day on our surface forces in Leyte Gulf. Enemy striking group of at least 2 BB, 4 CA, 4 CL, 10 DD may attack tonight after 1900.

General Plan. Our force will attack by torpedo and destroy by gunfire at moderate ranges Jap surface forces trying to enter Leyte Gulf thru Surigao Strait East or South.

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Battleline. Rear Adm. Weyler BatDiv 3 less NEW MEXICO, IDAHO, 4 less COLORADO, 2 plus DDs as named repel or destroy Jap battleline by gunfire fast closing to moderate range of from 17,000 - 20,000 yards. CruDivs 4 less INDIANAPOLIS plus MINNEAPOLIS, 12 less CLEVELAND and MONTPELIER plus DDs as named - left flank forces - defend left flank of own battleline. Strike battleline of enemy. Rear Adm. Berkey CruDiv 15 less NASHVILLE, SHROPSHIRE (R.N.Cruiser), DesDiv 47 - Right Flank Force - defend right flank of own battleline. Attack battleline of enemy. X-ray battle disposition used like A-2 in USF-10A. BBs in first station Lat.10-35 (E. of Huntungan Point) Long. 125-16 E and steaming at 5 knots in Easterly direction. BBs should turn at Longitude 125-27 E and, unless otherwise directed, operate within these limits of longitude with DD screen as needed. Stations on battleline will be kept by flank forces. Before battleline engagement, torpedoes may be fired.

Be on the lookout for enemy torpedoes, remembering possibility of going thru Jap torpedo waters before attack. Primary voice designated channel A to be used - 3845 kilocycles. As secondary voice designated channel B use 3980 kilocycles. For CW communications use 575 kilocycles. Use - 9 time. CTG 77.2 with left flank force in LOUISVILLE."

Having now finally decided on the above general plan, CTG 77.2 sent a signal to Commander Battle Line, Rear Admiral George Weyler, USN, and to Commander Right Flank, CTG 77.3, Rear Admiral Russell Berkey, USN, to report on board to discuss

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it. It should be pointed out here that the LOUISVILLE, MISSISSIPPI and PHOENIX were not at anchor but were all underway and heading for the entrance to Surigao Strait south. Commander Battle Line and CTG 77.3 reported on board the LOUISVILLE, by ship's boat and the discussion was held while all ships continued on towards the strait.

~~Commander Battle Line~~
~~Admiral Weyler~~ arrived first and CTG 77.2, without waiting for CTG 77.3, immediately entered into an exposition of his plan, with particular emphasis on the existing situation and on the necessity for making all AP count. The chosen range band of 17000 to 20,000 yds. was stressed because of the shortage of 14" and 16" AP which at that time averaged 22.7 rounds per gun. ~~Admiral Weyler~~ was very enthusiastic. About this time, CTG 77.3 arrived on board and the plan was explained to him. He was also highly enthusiastic. However, he pointed out the difficulties that his forces would experience when the disposition was in its extreme western position. CTG 77.2 then authorized CTG 77.3 to move his destroyers down the strait ^{to} in the vicinity of CABUGAN GRANDE Island and directed that they operate on a north and south line between BUGHO Point and ~~CABUGAN GRANDE~~ Island.

CTG 77.2, at this time, pointed out that it appeared to him as if a wonderful opportunity would be presented for using the torpedoes in the offensive role for which they had been designed, and emphasized that each such opportunity would be

immediately acted on. He offered to augment the destroyer strength of the Right Flank Forces in order to more nearly equalize the destroyer strength on both flanks. CTG 77.3 declined on the ground that he desired to control his own forces and that additional destroyers, unfamiliar with his tactical methods might affect his operations adversely, and besides, any additional destroyers would crowd even more, an overcrowded condition. CTG 77.2 accepted this situation and decided to keep Desron 56 together as one attack unit. He pointed out that he desired that the destroyers were to attack and retire along the shores of the strait because he thought that enemy radar, being notably inferior to his own, would be relatively ineffective against land, and because he feared that any of his destroyer units, which retired up the strait towards own battleline, would be fired on by own forces. This actually happened when the GRANT was hit by both own and enemy shells. He also pointed out that enemy destroyers might attempt the same type of destroyer attacks on TF 77.2 and TF 77.3, and that own destroyers, in moving to the attack, should be alert for this. Fortunately the enemy attacked, and then, unsuccessfully, through the center of the strait.

The above is discussed in detail to indicate the broad grasp that CTG 77.2 had of his plans and what he hoped to accomplish. There is no doubt but that both Commander Battle Line and CTG 77.3 departed for their respective commands fully assured as to the competence of their commander, and the soundness of his plan.

As CTG 77.2 realized that a great deal of time would be required to encipher the battle plan and that additional valuable time would be required to decipher it on each ship, he directed that the message should be sent out to the more important commanders, in plain English even using searchlight as necessary. He further realized that, by so doing, he might be endangering security, but all security measures, such as filters, were employed to reduce the lack of security to a minimum. He felt that such action was warranted because of urgency. He was very anxious to have as many ships as possible have the battle plan, and be in their correct battle stations prior to complete darkness. This was particularly important because his command was now composed of various units, some, of which, had never worked with him, and some, of which, had not as yet obtained the battle plan. The battle disposition was finally formed at 2022, but most ships had succeeded in taking station well before that time.

It was necessary to cruise at 5 knots because the strait was not wide, and the distance to be covered by own forces in an east-west direction was only about 10 miles. It was not desired to be constantly changing heading throughout the night and, by choosing 5 knots, changes would only be necessary about every two hours. CTG 77.2 planned to be near his western position as the enemy approached, in order to fight a normal action rather than a reverse action. There were strong currents

off Surigao Strait and this, combined with the slow speed, made station keeping difficult. However, with reversals of course at the relatively long interval of about 2 hours, it became relatively simple for the different units to maintain reasonably accurate station.

No! The above discussion covers all forces except Desron 54, which was on station patrolling across Surigao Strait, south, and the PT command. Desron 54, had been under the command of TF 79, Vice Admiral Wilkinson, the Commander of the 3rd Amphibious Force. This Desron reported to CTG 77.2 for duty the night of October 24th.

The PT boats, which based in the vicinity of PANOAN Island, were directed to prepare the maximum number of PTs and to cover Surigao Strait during the night of October 24-25 against the probable approach of enemy forces. They were further directed to remain south of Latitude 10° - $10'$ N. in order to avoid being mistaken as enemy by friendly forces. ^{However} Commander Motor Torpedo boats CTG 70.1, Captain S. Bowling, ^{who had} thereupon analyzed his ^{upon a message transmitted from CTF 77 about noon} problem, ^{found} that he had 39 PT boats ready for action and ^{had} assigned them to thirteen sections of three boats each. He ^{had} stationed these sections to give a complete coverage of Surigao Strait between 10° -^{17'} N. and 9° - $10'$ N. ^{which is upon receipt of this information CTF 77} The diagram indicates the locations ^{finally} assigned and shows that the PTs were in excellent position to intercept, evaluate and attack any enemy forces coming thru the strait. They were also in excellent position

advised all commands that PT boats would be found as far north as 10° - $17'$ N.

to contact scout the enemy ships and thus be able to report the movements of the larger Japanese ships. The PT boats had orders to report the enemy when sighted and then to attack independently.

There appear to have been no specific instructions about trailing the Japanese ships. This seems to have been an unfortunate omission, for information was of vital importance. The best way to obtain it in a night action, or in low visibility, is to maintain continuous contact with the enemy. Of course it is true that the PT boats were so located that one or more were generally in contact with the enemy within the limits of the PT area. However, does it not appear that it would have been wise for some of the PT boats to have trailed the enemy continuously? A constant flow of information is of value to any Commander, but it is of particular importance as action is about to be joined.

Weather conditions were fairly good. Cloud cover was about 50%--there was some rain and lightning--there was a half moon that would set at midnight--there was practically no wind, although ~~what~~ little there was was about 6 knots from the northwest; the sea was flat calm with no swells. After the moon set, the night was clear and dark. The visibility was from two to three miles without night glasses, but against the land it was almost zero.

While CTG 77.2's command was organizing for action, as above, the Japanese Southern Force was moving thru the strait in such

manner as to make a battle inevitable.

The Japanese Southern Force was divided into two separate Groups. One, consisting of the battleships FUSO and YAMASHIRO, the heavy cruiser MOGAMI and 4 destroyers, the MICHISHIO, ASAGUMO, YAMAGUMO and SHIGURE, under the command of Vice Admiral NISHIMURA, was from Vice Admiral KURITA's Second Fleet; the other consisting of the heavy cruisers NACHI and ASHIGARA, the light cruiser ABUKUMA and 4 destroyers, the SHIRANUHI, KASUMI, USHIO and AKEBONO, under the command of Vice Admiral SHIMA, was from Vice Admiral MIKAWA's sw Area Fleet, and was called the 5th Fleet. It will be noted that whereas the CinC Combined Fleet was the overall commander of both of these groups, the chain of command for each group led thru a different Admiral. These chain of command distinctions were maintained throughout the action with such extraordinary zeal that at no time did either commander report to the other as to his plans or as to the progress of the action. This was, reportedly, partially because Vice Admiral ^{although similar} SHIMA was younger and less experienced than Vice Admiral NISHIMURA, and the latter did not care to serve under the former, and, partially, because Vice Admiral SHIMA did not have all of the plans, and he was therefore reluctant to assume command.

Both groups operated on entirely different frequencies and neither, apparently, guarded the vital frequencies of the other. This did not have any serious effect, excepting during

the action, for radio silence was otherwise observed. The Japanese, however, had TBS and used it. Vice Admiral SHIMA's command must have been on Vice Admiral NISHIMURA's frequency, as his flagship heard some of NISHIMURA's reports during the action.

None of the ships of either of the above groups were carrying troops. Their duties were essentially combat-- they were not transports in any sense.

NISHIMURA's force had orders to reach Leyte Gulf at dawn on the 25th, which was 0630, and to attack immediately the transports which were landing troops. He was not to attack the combatant surface forces unless his own forces were not fully occupied or unless the enemy offered opposition. As the task of all forces was to cause the failure of the Leyte operation, the transports landing troops were the correct physical objective for the Japanese ships. However, the Japanese were too late, for most transports had landed their troops and many had already retired from the area.

Although Vice Admiral NISHIMURA was supposed to arrive off the entrance to Surigao Strait at 0630, he speeded up to arrive there about four hours earlier, or at about 0230. This was, apparently, because Vice Admiral NISHIMURA thought that he would have a better chance in a night action against American forces which might endeavor to prevent his passage, than he would in a day action. By making this decision Vice

Admiral NISHIMURA assumed the terrific responsibility of modifying his Commander's basic plan with all of the dangers that such a modification entails. Changes in plans are only permissible when the change contributes to the accomplishment of the basic plan. In this case, Vice Admiral NISHIMURA's decision was not sound. For his appearance off Surigao Strait informed TF 77 and CTG 77.2 and other American Commanders that the Japanese were continuing the action. Up to that time, in view of the noted retirements of both the Northern Force and the Center Force this had been a matter of serious doubt.

Vice Admiral Shima apparently realized that Vice Admiral Nishumura was ahead of him and, at the time, felt that it would be well to close him for support reasons. So he speeded up and gradually overhauled Nishumura. As will be shown later, he arrived off the lower entrance to Surigao Strait about one hour after Nishumura.

It will ^{be} remembered that Nishumura had been attacked in the Sulu Sea by carrier aircraft and had suffered two ineffective hits. He now knew that his presence had been discovered and his location known to the Americans. He decided to continue on. He apparently failed to notify Vice Admiral SHIMA of this attack.

His first contact with American forces after this air attack was with the PT boats, which at 2215, south of BOHOL Island, picked up something on their radars.

These PT boats closed and at 2300 discovered enemy forces on course 080° (T) speed 25 knots. At 2302, the enemy opened force and in the melee which followed, the PTs were hit before they could fire their torpedoes. They failed, also, to get off a contact report because of radio difficulties, so they proceeded to the next group off CAMIGUIN Island and informed PT 127 of that group. This PT at 1205 made the first report of the enemy. The position of this report was 75 miles from the battleline.

During the passage from CAMIGUIN, the enemy force ran the gauntlet of the PT boats. Four groups of these boats made fairly effective attacks which forced the enemy to use star shells, gunfire, and chasing tactics by destroyers, against them. By so doing, the PT boats kept the enemy under continuous pressure. The fact that the Japanese continued on, apparently, indicates that, in their opinion, these attacks were not too serious and that they did not expect much more later. These PT boats took quite a beating. Having commanded the Motor Boat Squadrons Pacific Fleet, I can assure you that these boats are ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ hard life, and that their commanders are highly courageous. In this action they had 10 PT boats hit, one lost, and they fired 34 torpedoes, of which one may have been a hit on the light cruiser ABUKUMA of Vice Admiral Shima's force.

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At 0200, the Japanese van passed into the southern entrance of Surigao Strait in the vicinity of PANAON Island. At 0215, this van was picked up by the radar on the LOUISVILLE bearing 178° distant 53,000 yards.

As has been stated previously, Desron 54 was stationed 3 miles apart as pickets across Surigao Strait in a northwesterly direction from HIBUSON Island to the western shore of Leyte. This group, under Captain J.G. Coward, USN, requested permission to make the first attack. This was approved by CTG 77.2, who also approved the suggested attack procedure, and directed that this squadron clear the area immediately after the attack. CTG 77.2 was happy to make this additional attack, as it fitted in exactly with his plans for sinking the enemy in the straits, or for slowing him down so that he might fall prey to the guns. However, Desron 54 was not a part of his original force and was not included in his battle plan. Its presence in the channel for any length of time could only lead to confusion.

About this time CTG 77.2 directed all destroyers to establish rendezvous points well clear of the battle line. This was necessary, as at night, even with IFF, it was hard to distinguish friend from foe, and it was thought that, by having set rendezvous points, destroyers assembling at these points would not be mistaken for enemy.

At 0229, Desron 54 launched its attack. It was divided into two groups which were to attack the enemy from both sides.

The eastern group, REMEX, McGOWAN, MELVIN, formed an attack group at 0227 and stood south. At 0301 when about 11 miles south of HIBUSON Island, these 3 DD's fired a total of 27 torpedoes at a large target bearing 212° (T), distant 11,600 yards. As this command turned away to retire under a smoke screen, it was illuminated by the Japanese with searchlight and star shells and was fired on by secondary battery shells. The Japanese gunfire was poor, at first, but it rapidly improved so that it was soon drenching the destroyer decks with near misses. At 0309, the Commander 1st section reported seeing two explosions in the enemy formation. The enemy formation was reported by Comdesdiv 108 as 2 BB, 1 CA screened by several destroyers. Actually, they were originally in column as follows-- MICHISHIO, ASAGUMO, YAMAGUMO, SHIGURE, YAMASHIRO, FUSO, MOGAMI-- although the destroyers may have shifted to a screen later.

The Western Group (McDermutt Monssen) stood down the western side of the strait and hugged the Leyte shore in order to prevent being picked up by enemy radar. When about 12 miles south of CABRIGAN GRANDE Island, these two destroyers at 0311 launched 20 torpedoes at a target bearing 110°, distant 9,000 yards (average). The enemy fired at these destroyers, but did not illuminate them or hit them, although the MONSSEN was splashed by near misses. The skillful use of smoke screens prevented further damage. At 0319, both the MONSSEN and the McDERMUTT

saw several large explosions in the direction of the target. One of these explosions was noted in the LOUISVILLE at 0320.

Meanwhile, Desron 24 had also been divided into two sections; Section I consisted of the HUTCHINS, DALY and BALCH; Section II of the ARUNTA (RAN) KILLEN and BEALE. At 0300, CTG 77.3 released this squadron to the attack and directed that it proceed down the shore line and make smoke during the approach. Section II fired first. It released its torpedoes at 0325 from the port bow of the enemy formation at a battleship of the FUSO class, and at an average range of 7,000 yards. It then retired without damage. Section I, under the squadron Commander, Captain McManes, continued on and at 0330 launched 15 torpedoes at two different targets, one bearing east at 10,700 yards, another bearing southeast. These were half salvos of 5 torpedoes each from each ship.

It was against this section that the Japanese fired a brilliant greenish star which illuminated the section. The Japanese did not, at first, believe these ships to be enemy, and apparently endeavored to signal them, but, upon being answered with gunfire, the Japanese returned the fire in all directions--reported through 360°. This shows the confusion that was beginning to appear in the Japanese ships. The Japanese ships fired torpedoes which just missed the DALY by inches. Section II continued on south and at 0344 noted what were claimed to be torpedo hits on the Japanese ships. Meanwhile, this section opened fire on what

appeared to be a heavy cruiser. It continued this fire until the American battleline opened up, when the section commander directed the section to clear the area.

As these torpedo attacks were being made, the Japanese ships which remained, notably the FUSO, ^{and MOGAMI} continued on. CTG 77.2 kept a close watch on the movements of the Japanese ships, not only from the CIC but, also, from the bridge. At about 0335, Commander Battle Line ordered his battleline to commence firing when the enemy range closed to 26,000 yards. This signal was a surprise to CTG 77.2, as the authorized range band was 17,000 to 20,000. However, as the T would be crossed if the Japanese continued on, and as the range would be closing at its most rapid ratio, CTG 77.2 decided to take no action, even though he knew that this order indicated that the Commanders, and, evidently, the commands, were becoming restive. However, CTG 77.2 was not restive. He was cool and calm, and he could see nothing which had occurred which caused him to change his plans. The range for opening fire would be 17,000 to 20,000 yards for the battleline and he would give the order. Evidently, Commander Battle Line felt reassured by CTG's silence and he withheld his fire.

At 0335, CTG 77.2 decided to launch a final destroyer attack on the enemy ships still proceeding up the change. So he ordered Desron 56 to attack and get the big ships. The enemy, at this time, were 1780 (T), distant 28,000 yards. In this attack Desron 56 had been broken up into 3 sections of 3 destroyers

each. Section I passed to the eastward and Section II and III passed to the westward of the left flank cruisers. These sections were composed as follows: Section I (NEWCOMB, R. P. LEARY, A. W. GRANT), Section II (ROBINSON, HALFORD, BRYANT) and Section III (H. L. EDWARDS, LEUTZE, BENNION).

Section II which was assigned the starboard bow sector of the approaching enemy, fired, at 0355, 15 torpedoes at a target bearing 223° (T), distant 8,000 yards. Two hits were claimed.

Section III, which was assigned the port sector, fired, at 0358, 15 torpedoes at the same target when it bore 121° (T), distant 7,800 yards.

CTG 77.2 planned to cover the attack of this squadron by gunfire, and he succeeded admirably. All destroyer attacks had been heretofore unsupported, but now the strait was widening out and Desron 56 would attack more nearly in open water. In so doing, it would probably be met by destructive enemy fire, as it would not be very well protected against enemy radar. The guns would replace the anti-radar effect.

Therefore, after allowing these destroyers 15 minutes to get into suitable firing positions, and with the enemy leading heavy ship distant but 15,900 yards from his flagship, he ordered open fire. At 0352 the left flank cruisers opened fire on course 090° (T) speed 5 knots. At 0353 the battleline opened fire. The effect was stupendous; the sky was filled with tracers; the strait with burning ships. This firing continued until 0410 when CTG 77.2 received a message from Comdesron 56 that it was

receiving fire from friendly forces. He had feared that this might happen and had taken all precautions against it, but here it was. As all enemy ships appeared to have turned away, he ordered cease firing. Course was then reversed to 270° (T) to avoid what appeared to be torpedo fire which was reported by the DALX at . CTG 77.2 then, at 0417, being mindful of the fact that the Japanese ships were fast retiring, ordered the battle line destroyers, Desdiv X-ray -- to report to OTC. For some unexplained reason Comdesdiv X-ray failed to report until 0429. Meanwhile, at 0420, CTG 77.2 suggested to CTF 77 that as the enemy appeared to be retiring to the south, an air attack should be made at the earliest practicable moment to insure that none got away. This air attack was made, and succeeded in sinking the MOGAMI.

At 0431, CTG 77.2 directed Comdesdiv X-ray to head south, fire torpedoes at the fleeing enemy and then retire to the northward hugging the coast. This division took long to get going, and therefore was not successful in attacking any of the enemy ships.

At 0432, CTG 77.2 took the left flank cruisers south at 15 knots to knock off any cripples. He directed, at 0457, that Desron 56 should form on the cruisers as a screen. Meanwhile, the right flank cruisers headed south to support the left flank cruisers. The battle line was directed to remain off the entrance to the strait as it was not desired to bring them down into waters which might be dangerous because of floating mines, possible submarines, and enemy destroyers. At 0519, CTG 77.2 increased

speed to 20 knots. About this time several large enemy ships on fire were noted, so CTG 77.2 changed course to somewhat south of west and opened fire on both ships. One of them, which was very large, and which may have been the FUSO was white hot from fire--the other, which may have been the MOGAMI was also on fire. At 0537, CTG 77.2 felt, in view of the presence of these ships and of 4 other ships which had been reported, at 4201, by PT boats as heading up the strait, that it would be wise to retire and wait until the situation in the strait had cleared somewhat. So at 0537 he headed north (010°T) and ceased firing.

At 0617, as dawn was breaking, he decided to head south again and wipe out the cripples. He, therefore, headed south, discovered the crippled destroyer, the ASUGUMO and sunk it by gunfire from both the DENVER and COLUMBIA plus 3 destroyers. The ASUGUMO returned fire at 0656, but its fire was ineffective. However, own fire was not too effective either and it was not until 0721 that the ASUGUMO sank.

At 0727, CTG 77.2 was advised by CTF 77 that the escort carrier group, TF 77.4, was under attack by enemy units about 25 miles northeast of SAMAR Island. CTG 77.2 immediately reversed course up the channel, reassembled his forces and prepared, (a) defend the group, and (b) to go to the aid of the CVE's. Thus ended the battle of Surigao Straits.

TITLE OF THE PRESENTATION

Date **21 March 1947**

Date 21 MARCH 1947

RIGHT SCREEN (FACING STAGE)

Box No.	FILE No	TITLE OF SLIDE	Box No.	FILE No	TITLE OF SLIDE
B47	1277	Forces Engaged			
		Blank			
	1275	Pacific Strategy			
		Blank			
	1268	Air Searches, 24 Oct.			
		Blank			
	1253	Location Allied Forces			
	1278	Battle Order			
	1253	Location Allied Forces			
		Blank			
	1277	Forces Engaged			
		Blank			
	1271	Nishimura enters Surigao			
	1270	Desron 54 Attacks			
	1273	" 24 "			
		Blank			
	1274	Desron 56 Attacks			
	1272	Battle Line Opens Fire			
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	1276	The Chase			
		Blank			

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Gentlemen of the National War College.

²¹²⁸
Show B47-1277

I cannot begin to tell you of how gratified I am to be here. I have long had a deep belief in the need for the education of naval officers in the art of war. I believe also in the training of ~~naval~~ officers in technology, which is a portion of the science of war, but I have always felt that, until this war, the idea of being an expert in technology took precedence over the idea of being an expert in the art of war, which is the application of the science of war to actual military situations. The employment of mental power in the solution of military problems now appears to have become recognized as an essential of fighting strength, as it is the source of professional judgment. Had this not been so, I doubt if we would have had a National War College and I further doubt that the National War College would have had the great prestige it already enjoys. There is no doubt but that the National War College fills an important place in the art and science of command. I believe every one of you should take great pride in being a member of this student body.

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Cut B47-1277

Today we are going to discuss the Battle of SURIGAO Strait which is one of the more popular battles of the war because of the crossing of the T. I shall endeavor to portray that battle as based on the information available from both American and Japanese sources. However, my information from Japanese sources

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is generally from interrogations, which experience has shown to be rather loosely worded. I have found that the documentary data, which is obtained from translations of reports of the Commanders of forces and of ships; from the diaries, from the logs and from the merit reports is far more accurate than the interrogations are. None of this data has been made available at this time for this study of the Battle of SURIGAO Strait. However, some of the Japanese movements here portrayed are my own modifications of sketches which were made by Japanese naval officers at the Japanese Naval War College. These sketches were drawn on charts of SURIGAO Strait which had been prepared by our own naval historians and had been submitted to the Japanese in Tokyo for comment.

The Battle of SURIGAO Strait was one of three related actions which comprised the Battle for LEYTE GULF. These three actions all resulted from the Japanese opposition to the American landings at LEYTE GULF on 20 October 1944.

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Show B47-1275

Before going into a discussion of SURIGAO Strait it might be well to discuss for a moment, the strategical considerations which led up to the Battle of LEYTE GULF. It will be remembered that American strategy called for a two-prong drive across the Pacific--one drive, spearheaded by a combined Allied Army-Navy Force commanded by General of the Army MacArthur, was moving north from the SOLOMONS and NEW GUINEA, the other drive, spearheaded by an Army-

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Navy-Marine Force commanded by Fleet Admiral Nimitz, was moving west from GUAM, ENIWETOK and PEARL HARBOR. MacArthur's drive which had seized HOLLANDIA, BIAK and CAPE SANSAPOR was next to seize TALAUD and MOROTAI and Admiral NIMITZ's drive was next to seize PELELIU, YAP and ULITHI. The successful accomplishment of these two operations would effectively clear the sea approaches east of the PHILIPPINES and would provide the Allies with bases from which the VISAYAS and MINDANAO could be attacked by shore based air forces, and LUZON by carrier aviation. Also these islands would be stepping stones for the attack on MINDANAO originally planned for some time in November.

The operations for the capture of MOROTAI and PELELIU took place as scheduled. The Marines landed on PELELIU on 14 September, but it was not until 12 October that enemy resistance ceased. MOROTAI was captured on 15 September with slight opposition.

During and preceding the operations for the capture of the above islands, the fast carrier force under Admiral Halsey had been making air strikes on MINDANAO to neutralize the bases from which aircraft might interfere with the above operations. These air strikes disclosed an unexpected air weakness in MINDANAO, so it was decided to strike in the Central PHILIPPINES on 12 September to test the defenses there. Very little opposition was encountered. As a result, Commander 3rd Fleet recommended that the operations for capturing YAP and PELELIU be cancelled and that LEYTE be seized immediately. CinCPoa replied that

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PELELIU would be taken and YAP reconsidered. Meanwhile, MacArthur had captured MOROTAI.

On 14 September, the JCS decided to by-pass YAP and TALAUD and to land on LEYTE instead on 20 October. This plan was followed, and MacArthur's 6th Army landed on LEYTE as scheduled.

Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, CTF 77, was General MacArthur's naval commander and, as such, was responsible for all naval matters connected with the landing. Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf was a task group Commander under Vice Admiral Kinkaid and, as such, commanded the Bombardment and Fire Support Groups of Task Force 77, with the title of Commander Task Group 77.2.

The Japanese, ~~on the other hand~~, realized that the Allied forces were moving across the Pacific in two prongs. However, they showed extreme reluctance to embark in an all-out defense of the southwestern prong--the MacArthur prong--unless the Japanese high command became convinced that the major Allied thrust was directed to that area. The Central Pacific was the area of primary concern, as it was nearer the Japanese Homeland.

After the American capture of the MARIANAS, the Japanese estimated that the Allied forces would seize PALAU and HALMAHERA in mid-September and that the PHILIPPINES would be invaded about middle November. How close an estimate this was of the Allied plans! MOROTAI and HALMAHERA are the only difference.

The Japanese, therefore, established a new line of defense joining the PHILIPPINE Islands, FORMOSA, RYUKYU Island, Japanese

Mainland, HOKKAIDO and the KURILE Islands. The operations for the defense of this area were designated "SHO".

SHO #1 was the defense of the PHILIPPINE Islands area.

The Japanese were not alarmed by the air raids by the fast carriers in the RYUKYUS, FORMOSA and PHILIPPINES. They considered these to be no more than simple raids, and were not thought to be preparatory steps to the invasion of the PHILIPPINES. The Japanese therefore decided to destroy American forces during the month of October by land based aircraft. They hoped by these operations to slow down the Allied advance into the PHILIPPINES thus giving the Japanese a chance to prepare for the defense of the PHILIPPINES. Surface forces were not to be used unless the Allied intent to land in the PHILIPPINES became apparent.

However, the Allied landing in LEYTE in October changed the Japanese defensive time table and called for an immediate decision. The Japanese realized that they were at a decisive stage of the war, and that failure to drive the Americans from the LEYTE beachheads would probably insure their defeat in the war. They therefore reacted with all available forces. Sho #1 was activated. One Carrier Force called the Northern Force was sent on a northerly course to the east of LUZON to draw off Admiral Halsey's 3rd Fleet, one surface ship force called the Center Force sortied thru SAN BERNARDINO Strait, and, in endeavoring to reach LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait, east collided with Rear Admiral Sprague's escort carrier group, and the third force, a surface ship force called the Southern Force, in endeavoring to

reach LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait, south, was annihilated by Rear Admiral Oldendorf's Bombardment and Fire Support Group. It is with this latter action that today's presentation deals.

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Cut B47-1275

The plans for the Battle of SURIGAO actually began to take shape while Rear Admiral Oldendorf was at HOLLANDIA during the planning for the LEYTE GULF operation. He made a careful analysis, at that time, of the possible enemy forces that might be encountered in the LEYTE operation and the strength and weakness factors compared to his own command, and, then he promulgated a battle plan which covered the range band at which to fire-- 17,000 to 20,000 yards--also the possible battle formation A-2-- and the fact that attacks by destroyers may be ordered prior to the engagement of the battlelines. He chose the range band on the fact that the allowance of AP (armor-piercing shells) for all ships was low--about 20% of normal for 14" and 16" guns-- about 34% of normal for 8" guns, with the remainder HC (high capacity) shells for bombardment. Normal loads were retained for 6" guns and smaller, as the normal ammunition allowance was considered effective for bombardment. It was considered imperative that the expectancy of hits should be high. These loads were based on the fact that the Bombardment & Fire Support Group was loaded for PALAU (PELELIU) and YAP and not for LEYTE. It was not thought that PALAU or YAP were within ready striking distance of Japanese surface forces and that the 3rd Fleet acting

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as a Covering Force would intercept any threatening force. It was therefore decided to load for bombardment only. When it was decided to go to LEYTE it was not possible to make much change in the ammunition loading, as there was little AP in the area and the reloads on the ammunition ships were in the same or less proportion of AP vs HC as had obtained for the original loads. Therefore, as a result of this analysis, CTG 77.2, Rear Admiral Oldendorf, and his staff, had a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his own command and a pretty good idea of the same factors of the Japanese. Of course it was realized that these factors change as the enemy ships encountered change and that a new analysis must be made for each particular case. However, the overall effect was of tremendous value later.

Rear Admiral Oldendorf was not unaware of what the enemy might attempt to do, as this group was to be the first of the invasion forces to arrive at LEYTE and it was his responsibility to prepare the area for the landing of the 6th Army. As early as 15 October, while en route to LEYTE, he wrote in his night orders, for the information of the staff duty officer, the fact that it was quite possible that the enemy fleet might come thru SAN BERNARDINO Strait or SURIGAO Strait, or both, to endeavor to destroy his task force, TG 77.2, the Bombardment and Fire Support Group--or TG 77.4, the Escort Carrier Group, or both. This was because of the importance of the PHILIPPINES to JAPAN. From this time forward he had the possibility of such an action ever in his mind, and every move to replace ammunition and to cover own forces

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in LEYTE GULF was motivated by the possibility of surface ship action. The expenditure of AP ammunition was always viewed with concern, as replacement was difficult. In this connection it will be noted that only 48 rounds of 16" AP was available at LEYTE GULF on A-2 day. The Durham Victory, an ammunition supply ship, had 1000 rounds of 16" 45 HC, but this was not considered of any particular value against enemy heavy ships.

The LEYTE landing was made by General Kruger's 6th Army, all under the overall command of General MacArthur. It was undertaken under the concept of carrier based fighter support with but little land based air support, as the Army Air Force bases were too far away, and MOROTAI had but recently been captured. If my memory does not play me false, I remember the Army Air General saying, at a planning conference at HOLLANDIA, that his MINDANAO air fields would not be ready for some time. Therefore, all air cover was necessarily Navy, until the LEYTE fields had been captured and made usable.

2125
Show B47-1268

By agreement of forces concerned, the 3rd Fleet was to cover and support the operation as follows:

- (1) A-10 to A-7 Day effect carrier strikes on OKINAWA, FORMOSA and NORTHERN LUZON.
- (2) A-4 to and including A-day effect carrier strikes on the LUZON Central Philippine Area, and in direct support of the Landings.

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(3) A/1 and, thereafter, operate in strategic support, effecting strikes as the situation required.

The LEYTE operation began on schedule and progressed satisfactorily. Initial landings were made on SALUAN Island on October 17th, the main landing was made on October 20th, and the advance inland progressed as well as could be expected. However, beginning 23 October, it became increasingly apparent that the Japanese were going to oppose the landing with forces which involved most of the Japanese fleets.

Admiral Halsey, as Commander 3rd Fleet, had divided his task groups into three groups, and had assigned them in order from northwest to southeast in order TG 38.3, TG 38.2 and TG 38.4 at intervals of about 150 miles. TG 38.4 searched the southern VISAYAS. At 0905, October 24th, one of its search groups sighted and attacked a force reported to be 2 BB, 1 CA and 4 DD in the SULU SEA south of NEGROS. This force, which we shall call the Southern Force, had not been sighted before. The search group attacked and claimed to have made two bomb hits on each battleship, and rocket hits on the destroyers of this group. Actually, this report was in error. There was one ineffective bomb hit made on the FUSO in the vicinity of her catapults and one hit made on the forward turret of the SHIGURE. Neither hit seriously affected the battle efficiency of either ship. These attacks were finally ended at 1155.

Although a plane search had been made at dusk, it failed to locate the Southern Force and that force was not seen again until

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it was picked up by own PT boats around 2200.

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Cut B47-1268

Vice Admiral Kinkaid, who had been following the operations with great care, realized that the Japanese Southern Force appeared headed for LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait south. He, therefore, ordered Rear Admiral Oldendorf to prepare for a probable night engagement. He directed CTG 77.3, Rear Admiral Berkey, with his task group, to report to Rear Admiral Oldendorf. Rear Admiral Oldendorf's command TG 77.2 consisted of the old battleships, MISSISSIPPI, WEST VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, TENNESSEE, CALIFORNIA and PENNSYLVANIA; the heavy cruisers LOUISVILLE, flagship of Admiral Oldendorf, PORTLAND and MINNEAPOLIS; the light cruisers DENVER and COLUMBIA; Desron 56 consisting of NEWCOMB, BENNION, H.L. EDWARDS, R.P. LEARY, LEUTZE, ROBINSON, A.W. GRANT, BRYANT, HALFORD and Desdiv X-ray consisting of CLAXTON, THORN, WELLES, AULIC, CONY and SIGOURNEY. T.G. 77.3 consisted of heavy cruisers PHOENIX (Flagship CTG 77.3) and SHROPSHIRE, (RAN); the light cruiser BOISE, plus Desron 24 consisting of HUTCHINS, BACHE, BEALE, DALY, KILLEN and ARUNTA (RAN), all regularly assigned to the 7th Fleet.

In addition, Vice Admiral Kinkaid ordered the 39 PT boats located at PANAON Island to scout the enemy in the eastern MINDANAO SEA and the southern part of SURIGAO Strait, to report all contacts and to attack, if possible.

Rear Admiral Oldendorf was not surprised at this order. He had also been tracking all Japanese contacts and he realized that

action was imminent. However, he had been preparing for days for exactly this moment. It had been customary during the previous nights for T.G. 77.2 to take station south of Lat. 10°-46' N. and for T.G. 77.3 to take station south of the area between the southern transport group and T.G. 77.2, for the purpose of protecting the ships and beachheads.

Because of the many contacts which had been made on Japanese surface vessels, Rear Admiral Oldendorf had decided, on 22 October, that it would be wise to take precautionary dispositions in LEYTE GULF, with particular emphasis on SURIGAO Strait, south, and had issued a directive to his forces directing them to take stations with light forces initially located on an east-west line, four miles east of Tay Tay Point on course east, speed 5 knots, and with heavy forces plus destroyer screen located to the northwestward, south of latitude 10°-46' N. The heavy forces were placed in this area to give them the protection afforded by the area screen against torpedoes. The basic directive about remaining south of 10°-46' N. had come from Vice Admiral Kinkaid.

²¹²⁷
Show B47-1253

It is therefore apparent that, when, at 1513 on 24 October, Rear Admiral Oldendorf received orders from Vice Admiral Kinkaid to prepare for a night engagement, with indications that the enemy would probably approach through SURIGAO Strait, south, the concept of the Battle Plan had already been formulated. However, it became necessary to re-estimate the situation. It should be pointed out here that SURIGAO Strait, south, is about 35 miles long, and is

0 2 9 7

shaped like a wide funnel with a width at the southern end of about 12 miles and widening to about 25 miles at its northern entrance.

Naturally, what was desired was to maintain the favorable military situation then existing. As a running estimate was always maintained, as has been indicated previously, it was not too difficult to reestimate the situation. The question may have arisen, in some minds, as to what thoughts governed the positioning of Rear Admiral Oldendorf's command. Today it is quite simple to say that what he did was the correct thing to have done because it was so successful. However, at the time, it was not impossible that some Commanders might have thought it wise to go down the Strait and slug it out with the Japs as was done at GUADALCANAL.

Rear Admiral Oldendorf considered the enemy capabilities in order of greatest danger to himself to be (a) To continue on up the Strait and fight it out, (b) To pass in whole or in part thru HINATUAN Passage south of NONOC Island and endeavor to attack in present strength or reinforced from north thru SURIGAO Strait east, and (c) To retire without fighting. He realized that should the enemy retire without fighting, he would have succeeded in accomplishing his mission. The question as to whether to follow them should they retire, would be determined at the time, either by himself or by Vice Admiral Kinkaid.

0298

He next considered the question as to where to station his own forces with relation to the Japanese coming into LEYTE GULF thru SURIGAO Strait, south. Should he station them across the Strait, and, if so, where; should he send them in their entirety to combat the Japanese there down the Strait or should he send only certain forces down and hold the remainder across the Strait? He weighed these three courses of action and decided that the third course was obviously the correct one. He would keep his heavy forces across the strait with all of the gunfire advantage that gave him, with the possible crossing of the "T", and would endeavor, thru destroyer attacks, to so reduce the strength of the Japanese forces, and to so slow them down as to reduce heavily the possibility of own forces being torpedoed by long range Japanese torpedoes. In addition, he realized that by being across the Strait, it was solely necessary to make a turn thru about 90 degrees to comb the enemy torpedo tracks by paralleling their most probable tracks. This would reduce the danger from enemy torpedoes. Also, his forces had had little training in surface maneuvering, and a disposition across the Strait would tend to reduce confusion because of a lack of maneuvering experience.

He rejected the second course because, although he might sink more enemy ships by such action, he would probably have many of his own ships damaged and sunk and he would lose that freedom of action that he would have with his forces across the strait where there was plenty of sea room to the north. Besides, in the resulting melee of forces, which melee could be expected

because of the narrowness of the Strait, some of the Japanese ships might have slipped by and attacked the transports in the transport area. This he was determined to prevent, and he informed his commanders, at the conference, to be discussed later, that a cardinal objective of his policy was not to permit any enemy ships to slip by.

He ^{REJECTED} ~~reported~~ the first course as not being suitable. Even after he had made his decision to station his forces across the Strait, he realized that it was quite possible for the enemy to endeavor to outflank him, and that the best place to do this was along the western shore, as that was nearest the transport area. He therefore decided that his force would have to be stationed as near to the western shore as possible, to prevent any Japanese ship from slipping thru under cover of the shoreline and its anti-radar effect. He also realized that, by stationing his own forces that far to the west, he was leaving quite a gap to the eastward. In order to reduce this gap and in order to catch the enemy in a narrower part of the straits, he moved his battle line in from Tay Tay Point to HUNTUNGAN Point. He also decided that the left flank should be stronger than the right flank, so that he might detach some of these forces against any Japanese ship which was escaping to the north eastward. Another reason for strengthening his left flank was that he did not know what enemy forces might come in thru SURIGAO, east, whether from the north or from the south, and he had to observe this area. It was quite possible,

0300

as indicated previously, under enemy capabilities, for some or all of the forces coming up from the south to pass thru HINATUAN Passage south of NONOC Island and thence north into the Pacific. Such forces could pass through SURIGAO east and join with any forces coming down from the north. So far, nothing, in the few Japanese reports studied, indicates that such course of action was so considered by them. Rear Admiral Oldendorf did feel, however, that should the Japanese attempt such a move, the PT boats which had been stationed at the western entrance to this strait by direct order of Vice Admiral Kinkaid would discover them.

He plan as finally formulated and sent out by dispatch was as follows:

²¹²⁷
Cut B47-1253

~~Show B47-1278~~

GENERAL SITUATION X ENEMY AIRCRAFT AND NAVAL FORCES SEEM TO BE ASSEMBLING WESTWARD IN THE VISAYAS FOR AN OFFENSIVE STRIKE AGAINST LEYTE AREA AAA ALL TODAY AIR ATTACKS HAVE BEEN MADE AGAINST OUR NAVAL FORCES IN THE LEYTE GULF AAA ATTACK TONIGHT BY ENEMY STRIKING GROUP OF AT LEAST 2BB CMA 4 CA CMA 10 DD MAY OCCUR AFTER 1900 AAA GENERAL PLAN AAA THIS FORCE WILL DESTROY BY GUNFIRE AT MODERATE RANGES AND BY TORPEDO ATTACK ENEMY SURFACE FORCES ATTEMPTING TO ENTER LEYTE GULF THROUGH EITHER SURIGAO STRAIT EAST OR SURIGAO STRAIT SOUTH AAA PARAGRAPH TASKS BATTLELINE REAR ADMIRAL WEYLER BATDIVS THREE LESS NEW MEXICO CMA IDAHO CMA 4 LESS COLORADO CMA 2 PLUS DESTROYERS AS DESIGNATED DESTROY OR REPEL ENEMY BATTLELINE BY GUNFIRE CLOSING RAPIDLY TO A MODERATE RANGE OF FROM SEVENTEEN TO TWENTY THOUSAND YARDS AAA

0301

LEFT FLANK FORCES CRUDIV 4 LESS INDIANAPOLIS PLUS MINNEAPOLIS
 CMA 12 LESS MONTPELIER AND CLEVELAND PLUS DESTROYERS AS DESIG-
 NATED AAA DEFEND LEFT FLANK OWN BATTLELINE AAA ATTACK ENEMY
 BATTLELINE AAA RIGHT FLANK FORCE REAR ADMIRAL BERKEY CRUDIV 15
 LESS NASHVILLE) CMA RAN CRUISER SHROPSHIRE CMA DESDIV 47 DEFEND
 RIGHT FLANK OWN BATTLELINE AAA ATTACK ENEMY BATTLELINE AAA XRAY
 BATTLE DISPOSITION ASSUMED WILL BE SIMILAR TO ABLE DASH TWO IN
 USF DASH TWELVE ABLE WITH BATTLESHIPS IN INITIAL STATION LAT 10
 DASH 35 PAREN EAST OF HUNTUNGAN POINT PAREN CMA LONGITUDE 125
 DASH 16 EAST AND STEAMING IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION AT 5 KNOTS AAA
 UPON ARRIVING AT LONG 125 DASH 27 EAST BATTLESHIPS SHOULD REVERSE
 COURSE AND OPERATE BACK AND FORTH WITHIN THESE LIMITS OF LONGITUDE
 UNLESS DIRECTED OTHERWISE USING DESTROYERS AS SCREEN AS DESIRED AAA
 FLANK FORCES MAINTAIN STATION ON BATTLELINE AAA ALL SHIPS KEEP
 ALERT FOR ENEMY TORPEDOES AND BEAR IN MIND POSSIBILITY OF PASSING
 THRU ENEMY TORPEDO WATERS PRIOR TO ATTACK AAA USE 3845 KILOCYCLES
 AS PRIMARY VOICE CIRCUIT DESIGNATED CHANNEL, ABLE USE 3980 KILO-
 CYCLES AS SECONDARY VOICE DESIGNATED CHANNEL BAKER AAA USE 575
 KILOCYCLES FOR CW COMMUNICATIONS AAA USE ZERO MINUS NINE TIME AAA
 COMMANDER TG 77 POINT 2 IN CA28 WITH LEFT FLANK FORCE.

~~Cat B47-1278~~

²¹²⁷
 Show B47-1253

Having now finally decided on the above general plan, Rear
 Admiral Oldendorf 77.2, sent a signal to Commander Battle Line,
 Rear Admiral George Weyler, USN, and to Commander Right Flank,
 CTG 77.3, Rear Admiral Russell Berkey, USN, to report on board to

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discuss it. It should be pointed out here that the LOUISVILLE, MISSISSIPPI and PHOENIX were not at anchor but were all underway and heading for the entrance to SURIGAO Strait south. Rear Admiral Weyler and Berkey reported on board the LOUISVILLE, by ship's boat and the discussion was held while all ships continued on towards the Strait.

Rear Admiral Weyler arrived first and Rear Admiral Oldendorf, without waiting for Rear Admiral Berkey, immediately entered into an exposition of his plan, with particular emphasis on the existing situation and on the necessity for making all AP count. The chosen range band of 17,000 to 20,000 yds. was stressed because of the shortage of 14" and 16" AP which at that time averaged 24.8 rounds per gun. Attention was also called to the fact that the amount of HC ammunition in the heavy ships was, because of 5 days of shore bombardment, reduced to about ⁵⁸12% of normal allowance, and all but 20% of the 5" shells of the destroyers had been expended. Rear Admiral Weyler was very enthusiastic about the plan. About this time, Rear Admiral Berkey arrived on board and the plan was explained to him. He was also highly enthusiastic. However, he pointed out the difficulties that his forces would experience when the disposition was in its extreme western position. Rear Admiral Oldendorf then authorized Rear Admiral Berkey to move his destroyers down the strait in the vicinity of CABUGAN GRANDE Island and directed that they operate on a north and south line between BUGHO Point and CABUGAN GRANDE Island.

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He pointed out at this time that it appeared to him as if a wonderful opportunity would be presented for using the torpedoes in an offensive role and emphasized that each such opportunity would be immediately acted on. He offered to augment the destroyer strength of the Right Flank Forces in order to more nearly equalize the destroyer strength on both flanks. Rear Admiral Berkey declined on the ground that he desired to control his own forces and that additional destroyers, unfamiliar with his tactical methods might affect his operations adversely, and besides, any additional destroyers would crowd even more, an overcrowded condition. Rear Admiral Oldendorf accepted this situation and decided to keep Desron 56 together as one attack unit. He pointed out that he desired that the destroyers were to attack and retire along the shores of the strait because he thought that enemy radar, being notably inferior to his own, would be relatively ineffective against land, and because he feared that any of his destroyer units, which retired up the strait towards own battleline, would be fired on by own forces. This actually happened when the GRANT was hit by both own and enemy shells. He also pointed out that enemy destroyers might attempt the same type of destroyer attacks on TG 77.2 and TG 77.3, and that own destroyers, in moving to the attack, should be alert for this. Fortunately the enemy attacked, unsuccessfully, through the center of the Strait.

The above is discussed in detail to indicate the broad grasp that Rear Admiral Oldendorf had of his plans and what he hoped to accomplish. There is no doubt but that both Rear Admiral Weyler

and Rear Admiral Berkey departed for their respective commands fully assured as to the soundness of the plan. As Rear Admiral Oldendorf realized that a great deal of time would be required to encipher the battle plan and that additional valuable time would be required to decipher it on each ship, he directed that the message should be sent out to the more important commanders, in plain English even using searchlight as necessary. He further realized that, by so doing, he might be endangering security, but all security measures such as filters were employed to reduce the lack of security to a minimum. He felt that such action was warranted because of urgency. He was very anxious to have as many ships as possible have the battle plan, and be in their correct battle stations prior to complete darkness. This was particularly important because his command was now composed of various units, some, of which, had never worked with him, and some, of which, had not as yet obtained the battle plan. The battle disposition was finally formed at 2022, but most ships had succeeded in taking station well before that time.

It was necessary to cruise at 5 knots because the strait was not wide, and the distance to be covered by own forces in an east-west direction was only about 11 miles. It was not desired to be constantly changing heading throughout the night and, by choosing 5 knots, changes would only be necessary about every two hours. Rear Admiral Oldendorf planned to be near his western position as the enemy approached, in order to fight a

0305

normal action rather than a reverse action. There were strong currents off SURIGAO Strait and this, combined with the slow speed, made station keeping difficult. However, with reversals of course at the relatively long interval of about 2 hours, it became relatively simple for the different units to maintain reasonably accurate station.

The above discussion covers all forces except Desron 54, which was on station patrolling as pickets across SURIGAO Strait, south, and the PT command. Desron 54, had been under the command of TF 79, Vice Admiral Wilkinson, the Commander of the 3rd Amphibious Force and consisted for the purposes of the night action of the destroyers REMEY, McGOWAN, MELVIN, McDERMUT and MONSSEN. This Desron reported to Rear Admiral Oldendorf for duty the night of October 24th.

The PT boats, which based in the vicinity of PANOAN Island, were directed to prepare the maximum number of PTs and to cover SURIGAO Strait during the night of October 24-25 against the probable approach of enemy forces. They were further directed to remain south of Latitude 10°-10' N. in order to avoid being mistaken as enemy by friendly forces. However, Commander Motor Torpedo boats CTG 70.1, Captain S. Bowling, upon a voice transmission from CTF 77 had analyzed his problem sometime before he received these instructions, had found that he had 39 PT boats ready for action and had assigned them to thirteen sections of three boats each. He had stationed these sections to give a

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complete coverage of SURIGAO Strait between 10°-17' N. and 9°-10' N. He therefore notified CTF 77, who, upon receipt of this information, advised all commands that PT boats would be found as far north as 10°-17'. The diagram indicates the locations finally assigned and shows that the PTs were in excellent position to intercept, evaluate and attack any enemy forces coming thru the strait or endeavoring to pass thru HINATUAN Passage. They were also in excellent position to contact scout the enemy ships and thus be able to report the movements of the larger Japanese ships. The PT boats had orders to report the enemy when sighted and then to attack independently.

2127
Cut B47-1253

Weather conditions were fairly good. Cloud cover was about 50%--there was some rain and lightning--there was a half moon that would set at midnight--there was practically no wind, although what little there was was about 6 knots from the northeast; the sea was flat calm with no swells. After the moon set, the night was clear and dark. The visibility was from two to three miles without night glasses, but against the land it was almost zero.

While Rear Admiral Oldendorf's command was organizing for action, as above, the Japanese Southern Force was moving thru the strait in such manner as to make a battle inevitable.

2128
Show B47-1277

The Japanese Southern Force was divided into two separate Groups. One, consisting of the battleships FUSO and YAMASHIRO,

the heavy cruiser MOGAMI and 4 destroyers, the MICHISHIO, ASAGUMO, YAMAGUMO and SHIGURE, under the command of Vice Admiral NISHIMURA, was from Vice Admiral KURITA's Second Fleet; the other consisting of the heavy cruisers NACHI and ASHIGARA, the light cruiser ABUKUMA and 4 destroyers, the SHIRANUHI, KASUMI, USHIO and AKEBONO, under the command of Vice Admiral SHIMA, was from Vice Admiral MIKAWA's sw Area Fleet, and was called the 5th Fleet. It will be noted that whereas the CinC Combined Fleet was the overall commander of both of these groups, the chain of command for each group led thru a different Admiral. These chain of command distinctions were maintained throughout the action with such extraordinary zeal that at no time did either commander report to the other as to his plans or as to the progress of the action. This was reportedly partially because Vice Admiral SHIMA, although senior, was younger and less experienced than Vice Admiral NISHIMURA, and the latter did not care to serve under the former, and, partially, because Vice Admiral SHIMA did not have all of the plans, and he was therefore reluctant to assume command. Why this command confusion was not cleared up by CinC Combined Fleet is, as yet, obscure.

Both groups appear to have operated on entirely different frequencies and neither, apparently, guarded the vital frequencies of the other. This did not have any serious effect, excepting during the action, for radio silence was otherwise observed. The Japanese, however, had TBS and used it. Vice Admiral SHIMA's

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command must have been on Vice Admiral NISHIMURA's frequency, as his flagship heard some of NISHIMURA's reports during the action.

2128
Cut B47-1277

None of the ships of either of the above groups were carrying troops. Their duties were essentially combat--they were not transports in any sense.

2129
Show B47-1271

NISHIMURA's force had orders to reach LEYTE GULF at dawn on the 25th, which was 0630, and to attack immediately the transports which were landing troops. He was not to attack the combatant surface forces unless his own forces were not fully occupied or unless the enemy offered opposition. However, the Japanese were too late, for most transports had landed their troops, and many had already retired from the area.

Although Vice Admiral NISHIMURA was supposed to arrive off the entrance to SURIGAO Strait at 0630, he speeded up to arrive there about four hours earlier, or at about 0230. This was, apparently, because he thought that he would have a better chance in a night action against American forces which might endeavor to prevent his passage, than he would in a day action. By making this decision, Vice Admiral NISHIMURA assumed the terrific responsibility of modifying his Commander's basic plan with all of the dangers that such a modification entails. In this case, Vice Admiral NISHIMURA's decision was not sound. For his appearance off SURIGAO Strait informed Admirals Kinkaid and Admiral Oldendorf

and other American Commanders that the Japanese were continuing the action. Up to that time this had been a matter of serious doubt.

Vice Admiral SHIMA apparently realized that Vice Admiral NISHIMURA was ahead of him and, at the time, felt that it would be well to close him for support reasons. So he speeded up and gradually overhauled NISHIMURA. As will be shown later, he arrived off the lower entrance to SURIGAO Strait about 45 minutes after NISHIMURA.

It will also be remembered that NISHIMURA had been attacked in the SULU SEA by carrier aircraft and had suffered two ineffective hits. He now knew that his presence had been discovered and his location known to the Americans. He decided to continue on. He apparently failed to notify Vice Admiral SHIMA of this attack.

His first contact with American forces after this air attack was with the PT boats, which at 2215, south of BOHOL Island, picked up something on their radars.

These PT boats closed and at 2300 discovered enemy forces on course 080° (T) speed 25 knots. At 2302, the enemy opened fire and in the melee which followed, the PTs were hit before they could fire their torpedoes. They failed, also to get off a contact report because of radio difficulties, so they proceeded to the next group off CAMIGUIN Island and informed PT 127 of that group. This PT at 1205 made the first report of the

0310

enemy. The position of this report was 75 miles from the battle-line.

During the passage from CAMIGUIN, the enemy force ran the gantlet of the PT boats. Four groups of these boats made fairly effective attacks which forced the enemy to use star shells, gunfire and chasing tactics by destroyers against them. By so doing, the PT boats kept the enemy under continuous pressure. However, it is doubtful if they made any hits. The fact that the Japanese continued on indicates apparently that, in their opinion, these attacks were not too serious and that they did not expect much more later. These PT boats took quite a beating. Having commanded the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Pacific Fleet, I can assure you that these boats are rugged, their commanders are highly aggressive, their crews courageous. In this action they had 10 PT boats hit, one lost, and they fired 34 torpedoes, of which one may have been a hit on the light cruiser ABUKUMA of Vice Admiral Shima's force.

At 0200, the Japanese van passed into the southern entrance of SURIGAO Strait in the vicinity of PANAON Island. At 0215, this van was picked up by the radar on the LOUISVILLE bearing 178° distant 53,000 yards.

²¹²⁹
Cut B47-1271

²¹³⁰
Show B47-1270

As has been stated previously, Desron 54 was stationed as pickets across SURIGAO Strait in a northwesterly direction from HIBUSON Island to the Eastern shore of LEYTE. One picket was stationed between HIBUSON Island and DINAGAT Island and 4 pickets

0311

were stationed between HIBUSON Island and LEYTE. Comdesron 54, Captain J. G. Coward, USN, requested permission to make the first attack. This was approved by ^{Rear} Admiral Oldendorf who also approved the suggested attack procedure, and directed that this squadron clear the area immediately after the attack. However, Desron 54 was not a part of his original force and was not included in his battle plan. Its presence in the channel for any length of time could only lead to confusion.

About this time, Rear Admiral Oldendorf directed all destroyers to establish rendezvous points well clear of the battle line. This was necessary, as at night, even with IFF, it was hard to distinguish friend from foe, and it was thought that, by having set rendezvous points, destroyers assembling at these points would not be mistaken for enemy.

At 0229, Desron 54 launched its attack. It was divided into two groups which were to attack the enemy from both sides. The eastern group, REMEY, McGOWAN, MELVIN, formed an attack group at 0227 and stood south. At 0301 when about 11 miles south of HIBUSON Island, these 3 DD's fired a total of 27 torpedoes at a large target bearing 2120 (T), distant 11,600 yards. As this command turned away to retire under a smoke screen, it was illuminated by the Japanese with searchlight and star shells and was fired on by secondary battery shells. The Japanese gunfire was poor, at first, but it rapidly improved so that it was soon drenching the destroyer decks with near misses. At 0309, the

0312

Commander 1st section reported seeing two explosions in the enemy formation. The enemy formation was reported by Comdesdiv 108 as 2 BB, 1 CA screened by several destroyers. Actually, the Japanese ships were originally in column as follows--MICHISHIO (DD), ASAGUMO (DD), YAMAGUMO (DD), SHIGURE (DD), YAMASHIRO (BB), FUSO (BB), MOGAMI (CA)--although the destroyers may have shifted to a screen later. This appears doubtful.

The Western Group, MCDERMUT, MONSSEN, stood down the western side of the strait and hugged the LEYTE shore in order to prevent being picked up by enemy radar. When about 12 miles south of CABUGAN GRANDE Island, these two destroyers at 0311 launched 20 torpedoes (all that they had) at a target bearing 110°, distant 9,000 yards (average). The enemy fired at these destroyers, but did not illuminate them or hit them, although the MONSSEN was splashed by near misses. The skillful use of smoke screens prevented further damage. At 0319, both the MONSSEN and the MCDERMUT saw several large explosions in the direction of the target. One of these explosions was noted by observers in the LOUISVILLE at 0320. The torpedoes from this group appear to have sunk the YAMAGUMO and damaged the MICHISHIO and the ASAGUMO.

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Cut B47-1270

²¹³¹
Show B47-1273

Meanwhile, Desron 24 had also been divided into two sections; Section I consisted of the HUTCHINS, DALY and BACHE; Section II of the ARUNTA (RAN) KILLEN and BEALE. At 0300, CTG 77.3 in accordance with prearranged plans released this squadron to the attack and directed that it proceed down the shore line and make

0313

smoke during the approach. Section II fired first. It released 23 torpedoes at 0325 from the port bow of the enemy formation at a battleship of the FUSO class, and at an average range of 7,000 yards. It then retired without damage. These torpedoes appear to have so damaged the YAMASHIRO that she sank at 0341. Section I, under the squadron Commander, Captain McManes, continued on and at 0330 launched 15 torpedoes at two different targets, one bearing east at 10,700 yards, another bearing south-east. These were half salvos of 5 torpedoes each from each ship. These torpedoes were, apparently, fired at the MICHISHIO and the ASAGUMO which had been torpedoed by Desron 54 and were proceeding north.

It was against this section that the Japanese fired a brilliant greenish star which illuminated the section. The Japanese did not, at first, believe these ships to be enemy, and apparently endeavored to signal them, but, upon being answered with gunfire, the Japanese returned the fire in all directions--reportedly through 360°. This shows the confusion that was beginning to appear in the Japanese ships. The Japanese ships fired torpedoes which missed the DALY by inches. Section II continued on south and at 0344 noted what were claimed to be torpedo hits on the Japanese ships. At 0350 it fired 5 more torpedoes, range and bearing unknown. Meanwhile, this section opened gunfire on what appeared to be a heavy cruiser but what was evidently a destroyer. It continued this fire until the

0314

American battleline opened up, when the section commander directed the section to clear the area. ⁰³¹⁵
~~at 047-1273~~

While these attacks were going on, Vice Admiral SHIMA reached the southern entrance to the Gulf. He had planned originally to arrive off the entrance 0600, but now, in order to support NISHIMURA he had speeded up to arrive at about 0315. He knew that NISHIMURA was in the straits, for at 0000 he had heard over NISHIMURA's TBS that his force was under attack by torpedo boats and, at 0300, he had heard the order to reverse course to avoid torpedoes. No other word was received about NISHIMURA's command. The latter was evidently lost on the YAMASHIRO.

SHIMA's force, as it entered the straits, assumed an entirely different formation from that assumed by NISHIMURA. As will be recollected, NISHIMURA's plan was for the destroyers to precede the heavy ships. SHIMA's plan was for the destroyers to follow the heavy ships. This, his torpedo officer said, was the traditional Japanese formation with the Commander in the van.

The reasons for assuming such formations are obscure, but it is presumed that, as both Commanders expected torpedo attack, they decided to keep their forces concentrated so that they would not fire into their own ships. On the other hand, the strait was wide--never less than 12 miles--and a screen of destroyers ahead of each formation could have been helpful in advising as to approaching enemy forces. As it was, NISHIMURA's destroyers do not appear to have been used offensively; rather they appear to

0315

have been destroyed like sitting ducks. Was this not our own experience at GUADALCANAL much earlier?

As SHIMA entered the channel at 0321, the CL ABUKUMA, the flagship of the destroyers was torpedoed, apparently by a PT boat, and fell out of formation. SHIMA left her behind without escort, increased speed to 26 knots and hastened to the support of NISHIMURA.

Although suffering heavily from the Allied destroyer attacks, the Japanese ships of NISHIMURA's command which remained, notably the FUSO and MOGAMI, continued on. Rear Admiral Oldendorf kept a close watch on the movements of the Japanese ships, not only from Flag Plot but, also from the bridge. At about 0335, Commander Battle Line ordered his battleline to commence firing when the enemy range closed to 26,000 yards. This signal was a surprise to Rear Admiral Oldendorf, as the authorized range band was 17,000 to 20,000. However, as the T would be crossed if the Japanese continued on, and as the range would be closing at its most rapid ratio, he decided to take no action, even though he knew that this order indicated that the Commander Battle Line was becoming restive. He informed Commander Battle Line that he was about to open fire. Evidently, Commander Battle Line felt that the situation was satisfactory, for he withheld his fire. Why the battleline did not open fire when 26,000 yards was reached is not known, but it is assumed that the various ships waited for the flagship to "open up".

0316

2152
Show B47-1274

At 0335, Rear Admiral Oldendorf decided to launch a final destroyer attack on the enemy ships still proceeding up the channel. These were still NISHIMURA's ships. So he ordered Desron 56 to attack and get the big ships. The enemy at this time, were 178° (T), distant 28,000 yards. In this attack Desron 56 had been broken up into 3 sections of 3 destroyers each. Section I passed to the eastward and Section II and III passed to the westward of the left flank cruisers. These sections were composed as follows: Section I (NEWCOMB, R.P.LEARY, A.W.GRANT), Section II (ROBINSON, HALFORD, BRYANT) and Section III (H.L.EDWARDS, LEUTZE, BENNION).

Section II which was assigned the starboard bow sector of the approaching enemy, fired, at 0355, 15 torpedoes at a target bearing 223° (T), distant 8,000 yards. Two hits were claimed, but whether they were actually made is obscure.

Section III, which was assigned the port sector, fired, at 0358, 15 torpedoes at the same target when it bore 121° (T), distant 7,800 yards. These torpedoes missed to the north as the target at the moment of firing changed course to the west.

Section I which was assigned the center sector at 0405 from a position 4 miles west of HIBUSON Island fired 15 torpedoes at a target bearing 200° (T), distant 6,200 yards. The squadron commander was leading this section. Prior to launching torpedoes he noted that the enemy (FUSO) was turning left. Accordingly, he turned right across the channel to launch the

0317

attack. This was done to obtain a good firing position but, in so doing, it forced the section into a position where it could be readily picked up by the Japanese and was. It was also picked up by a cruiser which opened fire on the GRANT, the last ship in the column. There may be some criticism of the action of the Squadron Commander in changing course into the open water, but he had been sent to make an effective torpedo attack, and he apparently succeeded. It is possible that some of his torpedoes may have helped sink the FUSO. On the other hand, Section III which did not turn to make an effective attack missed.

As these destroyer attacks were being made, Vice Admiral SHIMA continued to move northward into the battle area. He could plainly see and hear the battle going on to the northward. Burning ships were plainly visible.

²¹³²
Cut B47-1274

²¹³³
Show B47-1272

Rear Admiral Oldendorf planned to cover the attack of Desron 56 by gunfire, and he succeeded admirably. All destroyer attacks had been heretofore unsupported, but now the strait was widening out and Desron 56 would attack more nearly in open water. In so doing, it would probably be met by destructive enemy fire, as it would not be very well protected against enemy radar. The guns would replace the anti-radar effect. Therefore, after allowing these destroyers 15 minutes to get into suitable firing positions, and with the enemy leading heavy ship distant but 15,900 yards

from his flagship, he ordered open fire. At 0352, the left flank cruisers opened fire on course 090° (T) speed 5 knots followed immediately by right flank cruisers.

During the approach the battleline had been in column on course 090° (T) at 15 knots. At 0353 the battleline executed ships right 30° (T), making the new course 120° (T). This was to give improved turret train angle to Battleship Division 4 and the MISSISSIPPI. At the same time, Commander Battle Line gave orders to open fire, and the battleline opened fire. The effect was stupendous; the sky was filled with tracers, the strait with burning ships. The battleline fired directly over the left flank cruisers and thereby, apparently, illuminated them to the enemy. For soon after, large enemy shells straddled the left flank cruisers. At 0402, battleline changed course to 270° (T) on direction of OTC. The signal sent out was Turn 15 which meant to come right by ships thru 150°. The CALIFORNIA misinterpreted the signal to mean that course was to be changed to the right to 135° (T). This resulted in a near collision, the TENNESSEE passing under the stern of the CALIFORNIA. This near collision brought out the necessity for paralleling the voice circuit by bridge radio. Had this been done, the error would probably have been discovered and the near collision averted.

Firing was continued until 0410, when Rear Admiral Oldendorf received a message from Comdesron 56 that he was receiving fire

from friendly forces. He had feared that this might happen and had taken all precautions against it, but here it was. As all enemy ships appeared to have turned away, he ordered cease firing. Course was then reversed to 2700 (T) to avoid what appeared to be

²¹³³
Cut B47-1272-

enemy torpedo fire. He then, at 0417, being mindful of the fact that the Japanese ships appeared to be retiring, ordered the battleline destroyers, Desdiv X-ray--to report to him. For some unexplained reason, Comdesdiv X-ray failed to report until 0429. Meanwhile, at 0420, Rear Admiral Oldendorf suggested to Vice Admiral Kinkaid that, as the enemy appeared to be retiring to the south, an air attack should be made at the earliest practicable moment to insure that none got away. This air attack was made by carrier planes, and succeeded in sinking the MOGAMI. At about noon the next day, another air attack was made, this time by Army B-24's and this attack sunk the ABUKUMA.

At 0431 Rear Admiral Oldendorf directed Comdesdiv X-ray to proceed south, and attack enemy ships, then to retire to the north along the shore.

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Show B47-1276

At 0432, Rear Admiral Oldendorf took the left flank cruisers south at 15 knots to knock off any cripples. He directed, at 0457, that Desron 56 should form on the cruisers as a screen. Meanwhile, the right flank cruisers headed south to support the left flank cruisers. The battleline was directed to remain off the entrance

0320

to the strait as it was not desired to bring them down into waters which might be dangerous because of floating mines, possible submarines, and enemy destroyers.

While Rear Admiral Oldendorf was conducting these operations, Vice Admiral SHIMA had not been idle. At 0420 he had arrived in a position from which he felt that he could deliver an effective torpedo attack against American ships about 13,000 yards away, on bearing 020. It is presumed that these were American destroyers, as the battleline was much farther away. He therefore turned to the right by column movement, and both the NACHI and the ASHIGARA fired their torpedoes. The MOGAMI was close aboard at this moment, but the NACHI thought that she was stopped. She was not stopped, so, incredible as it may seem, the NACHI and MOGAMI collided at about 0424. After clearing each other, the MOGAMI continued on in a southerly direction; while the NACHI and ASHIGARA headed north. At about 0450, the NACHI was challenged by a destroyer, the SHIGURE from NISHIMURA's force. The SHIGURE reported that she was having rudder difficulties, and that was all. Not a word about the action--nothing about own ships destroyed. The Commanding Officer of the SHIGURE stated later that he did not inform Vice Admiral SHIMA of the situation because he was not under his command and had no connection with him. Meanwhile, Vice Admiral SHIMA had ordered his destroyers to attack. They continued on to the north, reportedly at high speed. They could

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not have gone at high speed, however, as 30 knots for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour would have placed them 15 miles to the north of their 0420 position, or almost in the American cruisers, which as has been pointed out, headed south at 0432.

About this time, two large fires were noted which appeared to be ships on fire. Rear Admiral Oldendorf changed course to about 250° (T) and opened fire; first, on the ship to the east and then on the ship to the west. The ship to the east was so white hot that it is quite possible that it was not a ship at all but was, instead, a large oil fire. This latter thought is logical when it is remembered that best information available gives the YAMASHIRO sinking at 0341 and the FUSO sinking at 0418.

At 0537, Rear Admiral Oldendorf felt, in view of the presence of these ships and of the 4 other ships which had been reported, at 0520, by PT boats as heading up the strait, that it would be wise to retire and wait until the situation in the strait had cleared somewhat. He therefore changed course to north (0100T) and at 0539, ceased firing.

At 0617, as dawn was breaking, he decided to head south again and wipe out the cripples. He, therefore, headed south, discovered the crippled destroyer, the ASUGUMO and sunk it by gunfire.

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Cut B47-1276

At 0727, Rear Admiral Oldendorf was advised by Vice Admiral Kinkaid that the escort carrier group, TG 77.4, was under attack by enemy units about 25 miles northeast of SAMAR Island. Rear

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Admiral Oldendorf immediately reversed course up the channel, reassembled his forces and prepared, (a) defend the gulf and (b) to go to the aid of the CVE's.

Thus ended the Battle of Surigao Strait. It was a most crushing defeat for the Japanese and showed plainly how a Commander in superior strength, can, thru a proper plan and thru the intelligent compliance with his plan by his subordinate commanders, inflict disaster rather than simple defeat on enemy forces. It also showed how the failure to formulate an adequate plan, the failure to supply adequate forces, the failure of the Commanders to coordinate forces thru a correct chain of command, and the failure to carry out the plan assigned, can bring unhappy results to an otherwise gallant foe.

Finally, this battle, as indicated in the beginning of this presentation, was with only one of the three forces, with which the Japanese hoped to defeat Allied forces in LEYTE GULF and hence cause a failure of the landing there. The entire story of the Battle for LEYTE GULF will be told at the Naval War College on 1 April. It is hoped that, by this presentation, your interest in the War College presentations will be stimulated and that when you leave Newport you will have gained a thorough knowledge of one of the great Naval Battles of History.

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